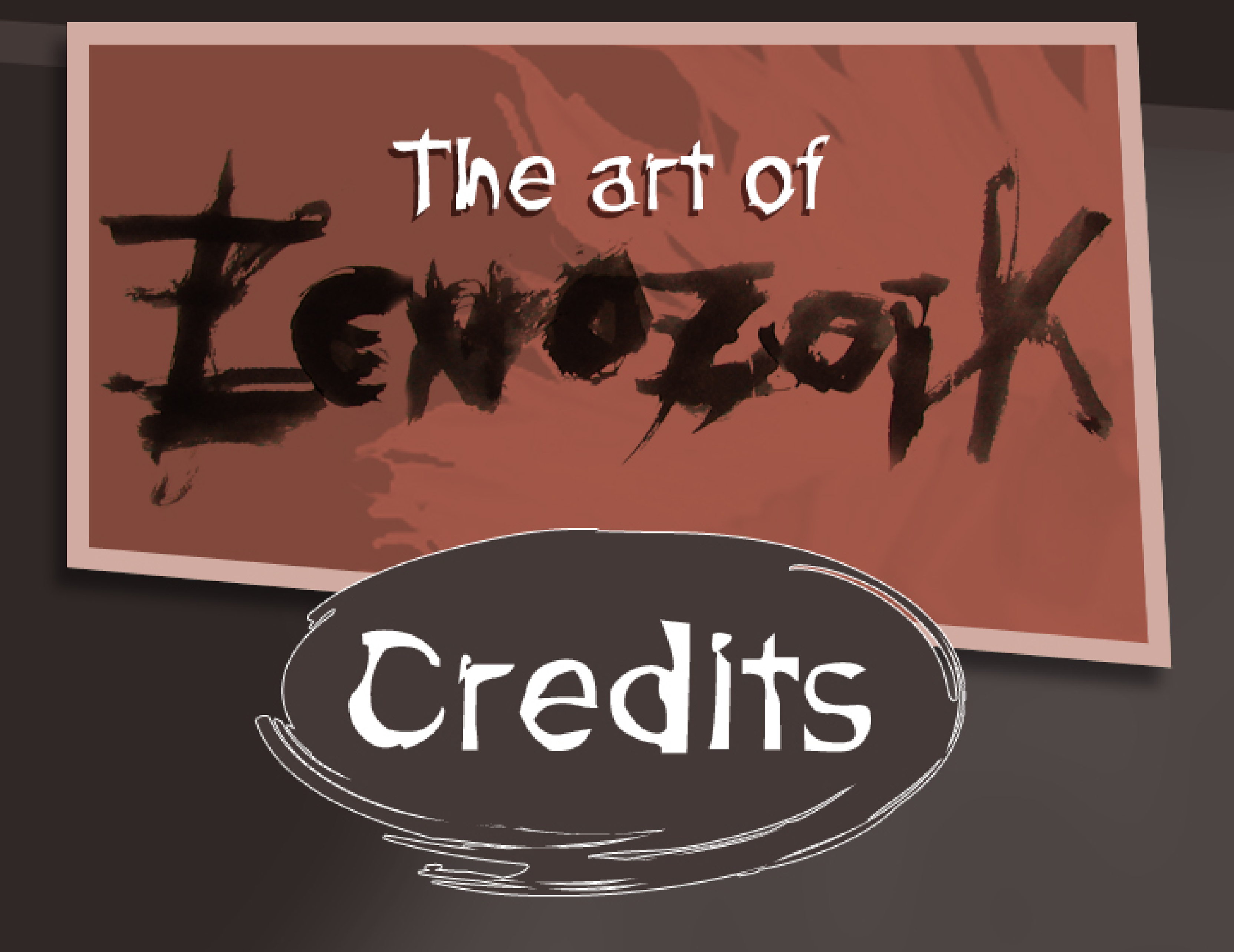

The art of
Zenozoik
ATLUS
ACE
TEAM




# Credits

## Contributing artists:

- Edmundo Bordeu
- Luis Santander
- Walter Berendsen
- Guillermo Ángel
- Carlos Bordeu
- Andrés Bordeu
- Jose Tomás Morandé

## Art book design and composition:

- Pamela Meneses

## Additional support:

- Javier Meneses




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Zenozoik was a very fun world to create.

The project was born in part as a reaction to what we saw as a very homogeneous "First Person" game landscape at the time. We saw the genre as being oversaturated with "military" or "military with a coating of sci-fi" themed games. The project was also born from our love of the very imaginative fantasy worlds from the 80s and the *Choose Your Own Adventure* books where anything could happen with the next turn of the page.

It was later that we tried to process what made those worlds interesting to us and started using the term "punk fantasy"; with its unashamed ugliness, and a variety we could seldom find in the worlds of orcs, dwarves, and elves.

Visual design, story, and gameplay were all developed in parallel so that no one area would force the others to adapt to it. In the text of this art book you can find many examples of gameplay informing the character design, character design informing the story, the story informing the game design, and so forth.

When the whole story needs to be almost entirely re-written because of a major gameplay feature change, you don't feel that this iterative approach is the soundest, but when we see the final result, we feel that the negative aspects of this design philosophy are worth it in the end.

We hope you enjoy this art book!

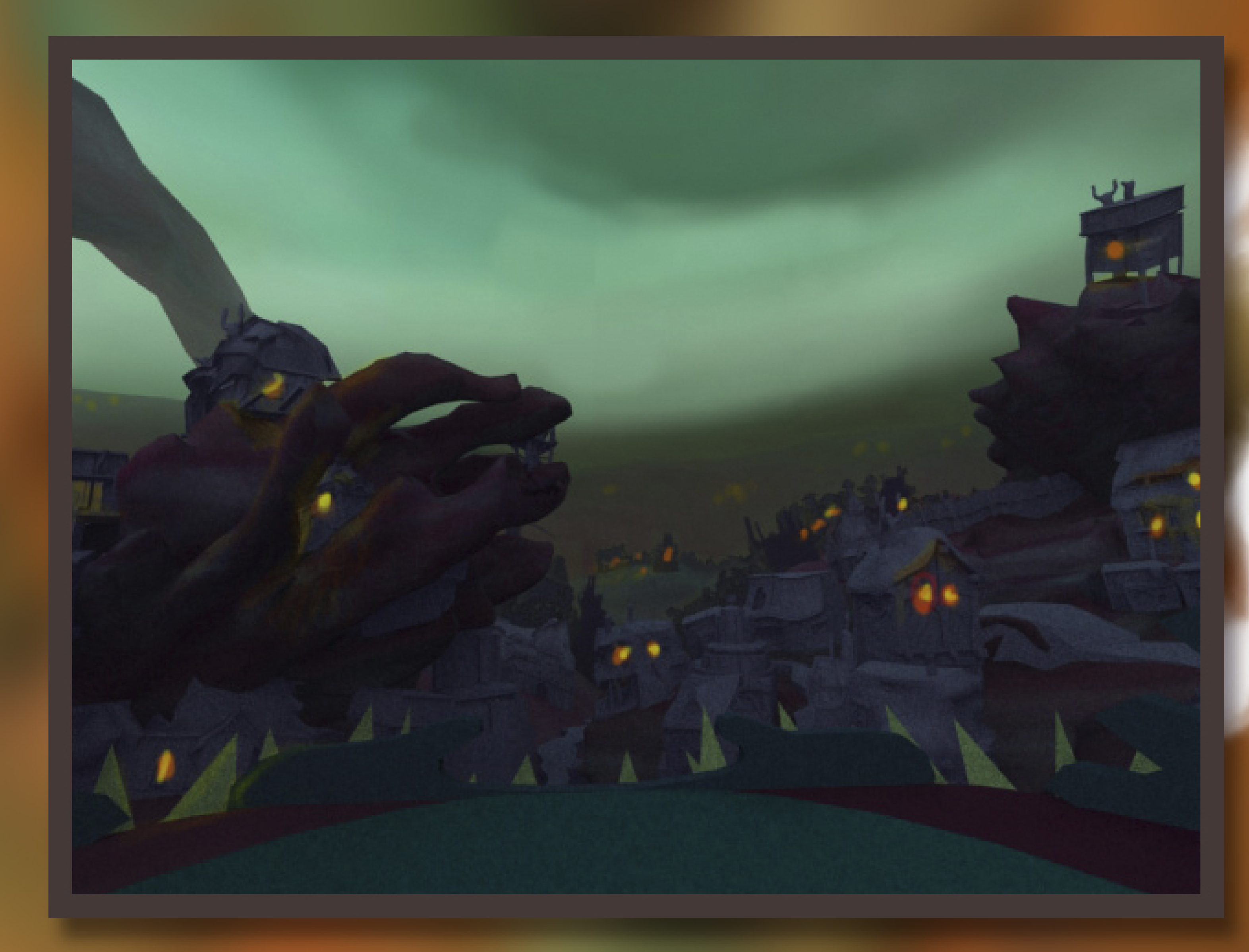
ACE Team



# Environments













# The plaza

The home city of our protagonists required a characteristic area that marked Father-Mother's territory. Since we were developing more outdoor than indoor locations in the first game to create the perception that the world of Zenozoik is much larger than what we allowed the player to explore, we decided that a good meeting area for "the family" would be a plaza. The balcony-shaped plaza was an ideal design to allow one to marvel upon the city stretching into the distance.




# Urban areas

This early concept was heavily inspired by John Blanche's illustrations for the *Sorcery!* adventure game books in which cities were depicted as chaotic places with all sorts of irregular structures. These urban areas would have little to no sense of planning and order with buildings blending in with each other.

The architecture in the urban areas needed to convey the notion that there was once a great city at the heart of Zenozoik, and what the players would get to see were only vestiges of an ancient civilization. The current inhabitants have taken refuge in between the colossal structures, but they took no interest in their heritage, building on top of the existing structures with rudimentary materials failing to preserve whatever order there once existed.

## Buildings






# The city gate

The city's gate was inspired by Antoni Gaudi's architecture. The final execution included color ceramic tiles, much like what can be seen in his work.

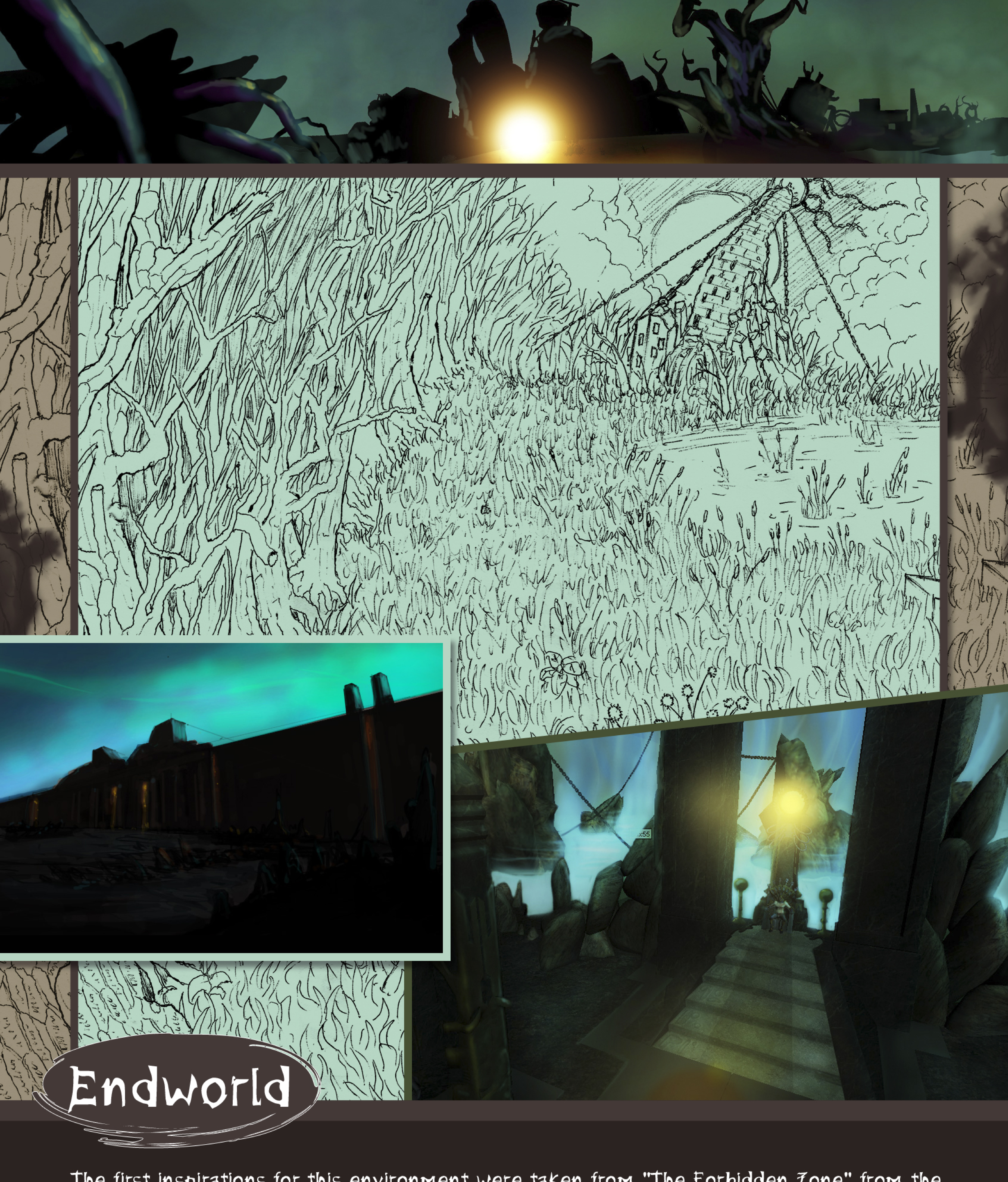
# Communicator

Though we never defined exactly how the Golems technology works, it definitely involves electricity and has crystals as power sources. Most things that float will have a crystal in them. The machinery is completely alien to the rudimentary architecture that was never meant to support it.




Whale


Structures



# Endworld

The first inspirations for this environment were taken from "The Forbidden Zone" from the *Planet of the Apes* movie. The inhabitants of Zenozoik do not dare explore beyond the desert because the barren wasteland is meant to stop travellers from reaching the north.



# Turtle Hut

This location was developed to create a non-hazardous area in the end-world environment so that the level was not only about combat and survival. The character residing in the hut is a text restorer (something very rare in Zenozoik) called "Word." Some thought his simple name was a reference to "Error," a town character featured in the 1987 NES game *Zelda II: The Adventure of Link*.


# Conceptual

During the initial phases of *Zeno Clash*'s preproduction, there was a lot of creative liberty to explore from an artistic perspective. The punk fantasy art style we embraced gave us much space for improvisation, something that we value greatly at ACE Team. This particular concept never made it into the game, but the fantasy influences are still there.


Artifacts






# Characters



# Ashenak

Ashenak was going to be the antagonist in our first Zenozoik prototype. He was to lead an army of elephant-men warriors against Halstedom. He was later discarded in future re-writes of the story.

## Wildlife Concepts



This elephant-like humanoid was the first of the "heavy class" to be designed for the game. The elephant men were first envisioned in the Zenozoik prototype like a complete race that would march against the city as an army. This idea was later discarded when the story was rewritten for *Zeno Clash* and only a single design was rescued to fill for a secondary character. The name "Deinother" was derived from "Deinotherium," a prehistoric relative of modern elephants from which the design was inspired.

# Deinother



# Barwoman

Originally developed for the Zenozoik prototype, the barwoman had a slightly different role. All the dialogue she uses in *Zeno Clash* is actually from the early Zenozoik recordings, but the dialogue was repurposed for the new, different scene. For example, a line where she complains to the drunk creature for asking for more rooster blood was originally intended to be said to the player if he pointed his weapon at her.



# Ghat

Ghat's thinness was partially a reaction to the hyper-muscular protagonists of videogames, but also a nod to the life he lived in *Zeno Clash*: he is someone who was near nihilism, both spending time with Corwids in the woods and after fighting Father-Mother for the first time, his actions triggering the conflict are not heroic...so a "healthier" looking protagonist wouldn't do. In the second game, Ghat is more emancipated and has a better sense of purpose, so subtle changes to the design make him look like he's become stronger (without resorting to steroids).






## Tcholk

Debuting in *Zeno Clash: Ultimate Edition*, this Corwid's armor presented a technical challenge for its rigidness and required adapting the design to the base skeletal structure shared by most characters.



## Oxameter

Oxameter, who only walks in a straight line, was created to introduce another example of the Corwids, reinforcing the concept that each one of them has a mania they have to live with. Though it sounds very simple to make a character walk in a straight line, practical problems appeared: what if the player stands in front of him? If you look at him long enough, won't you see him hit an obstacle?



## Corwid women

Unlike traditional fantasy games where most women are beautiful, in Zenozoik women are usually just as unattractive as the men. The Corwids, who gave in to their manias and live in the woods, had to look disturbing, dirty, and bizarre. Since there are so many strange characters in Zenozoik, we decided the differentiating factor of all Corwids was that they would always be wearing masks.



# Deadra

Empathy is the defining characteristic of Deadra, which is a more healthy method of conflict resolution than what Ghat and the Golems utilize. Deadra was the only one who had faith in Ghat, and pushed him to not give up. However, in *Zeno Clash II* her faith reservoir is just a bit emptier and she leaves him to do something of her own.

Though there are many animal people in Zenozoik, the horns in the design are not actually hers; she wears a headpiece under her hair with artificial horns.





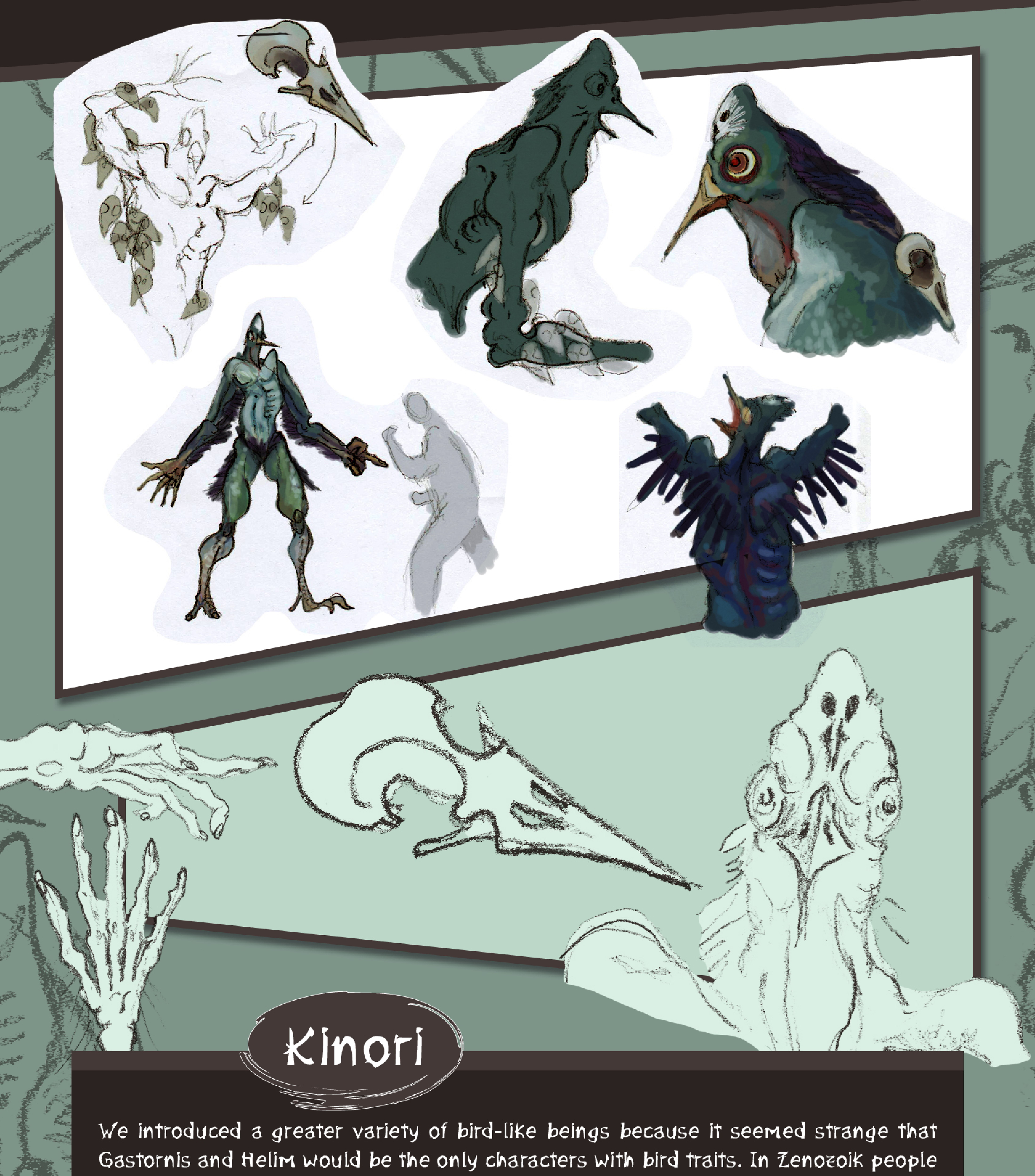
# Morreya

The only woman in the "tall" enemy class, Morreya is the leader (or oppressor) of the two-headed baboons. Though there are no lines of dialogue for her, her semi-mechanical throne and the tables with prosthetic parts suggest she is the one modifying the baboons. Sometimes the props and environment alone can tell the story.

# Nak Nak

Originally, she was to feature a mask that concealed a disfigured face. On a re-write of the story she became the leader of the singing tribeswomen, so she wears a mask just like any other Corwid. The disfiguration was not necessary anymore; Corwids do not wear masks because of shame.


Mantra
Tutterja & Gastornis
ABC
Adrence



## Kinori

We introduced a greater variety of bird-like beings because it seemed strange that Gastornis and Helim would be the only characters with bird traits. In Zenozoik people do not strictly belong to different species; any intermediate between a bird-man and elephant-man could potentially exist. This particular character caused a lot of frustration during the first combat testing because his head was so small that it was very hard to land a direct punch at the face, leading the designers to think there was a problem with the hit detection code.



# Father - Mother


Originally Father-Mother was a secondary character; just someone at a bar who didn't have anywhere to leave his baby and so just took it with him to the local bar and placed it on the table. Early play testers playing through the bar section thought he was a witch who was going to eat the baby, and we thought that assumption was interesting, but also very unfair! This giant bird-man, carrying his babies wherever he goes, evolved and became the antagonist of the first game and one of our most memorable characters.


ZENO CLASH

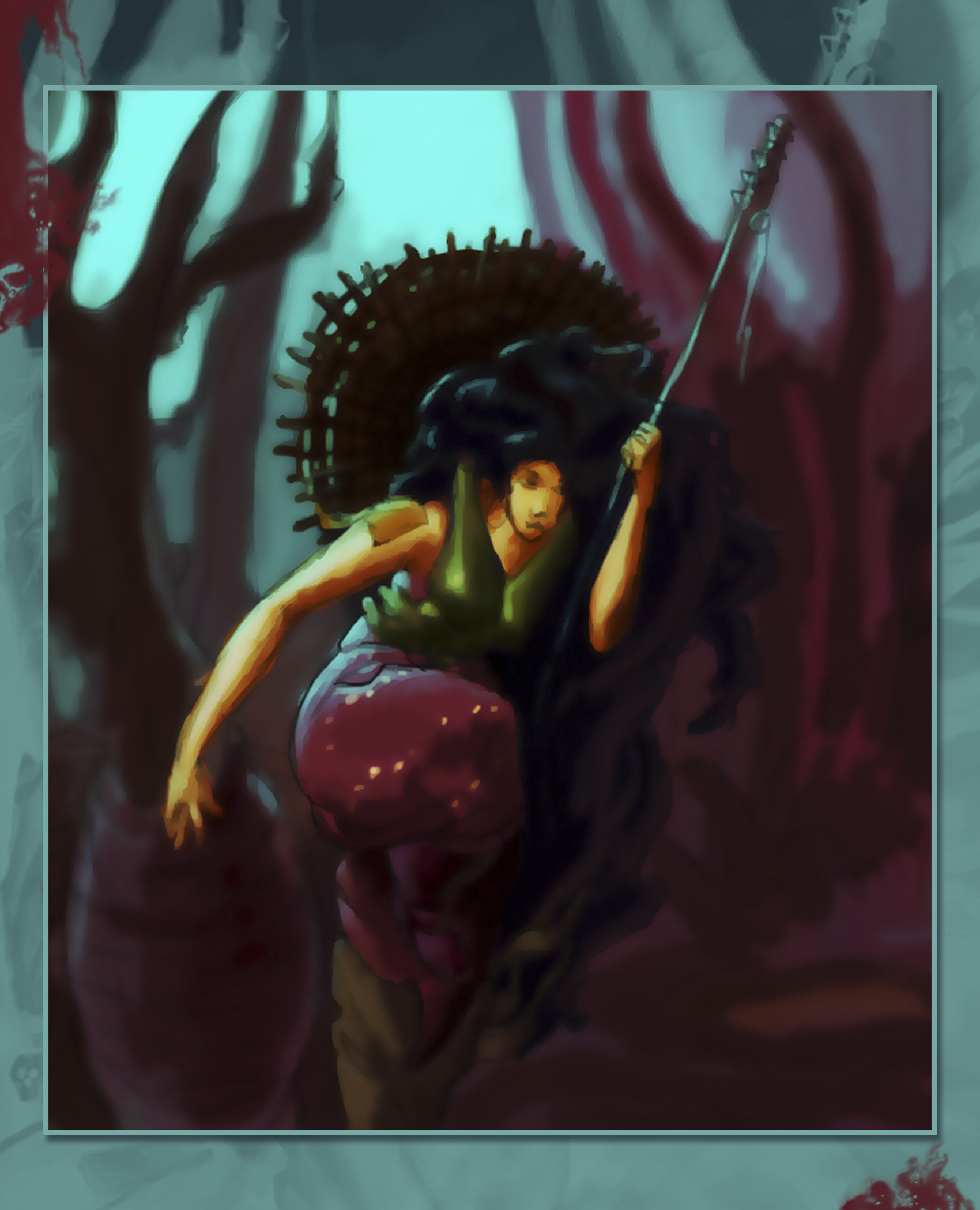


# Rimat

"Why is she so angry?" Many players were asking us that after fighting her repeatedly in the original *Zeno Clash*. The obvious answer is because Ghat tried to kill Father-Mother. However, she was much angrier than the other siblings, so there was something else going on there. Answering this question is part of the reason that we made her the co-protagonist in *Zeno Clash II*. She has a giant mass of ratty hair and a deformed leg she doesn't hide, but enhances by wearing a stylish crooked boot.


Zeno Clash

ZenoClash
Promotional mini comic





This giant bear-like creature was inspired by the "megatherium"—a prehistoric ground sloth that was as large as an elephant. An interesting anecdote is that shortly after we published a first screenshot on the internet, we received an e-mail from someone at Valve who was curious about how we had developed the fur technology on their Source Engine. This was a misconception, because all the fur on our creatures had been created using traditional transparency techniques.

## Therium



## Entelo

The Cenozoic prehistoric period presented the team with a fabulous variety of different animals to be inspired by when creating our creature designs. Entelo borrowed his name and looks from the "Entelodont," an extinct relative of pigs nicknamed the "hell pig."




## Chlara

I have been asked many times why the female Entelodont-people have four breasts, and it actually came from a biology misconception. Many character designs in Zenozoik are a mix between real mammals and humans, so I thought that if many mammals have 6 or 8 breasts, why wouldn't anyone in Zenozoik have more than two? I was later informed that though mammals may have up to 16 *nipples*, they never have more than two breasts. -E.



# North Golem

The symbols of authority Kax-Teh chose are more classic: rich golden leaf ornaments, a large crown, and the proportions of a heroic statue. One of the qualities of the Golem is that he is unchanging, unaffected, so his body has no orifices. The "Teh" in the Golems' names is an honorific placed after their proper names. Most likely, in the early years of Zenozoik when its inhabitants still knew of the existence of Golems, they turned the honorific "Teh" into the insult "Tef!"






# Shadows

The shadows were inspired by different abstract and futurist sculptures. They are imperfect or obsolete Golem designs of which many have been discarded. Some look crude and unfinished because their parts were used for another purpose. Others look corroded after so many years of being abandoned at the toxic "end of the world."



# Hunter

When the Hunter was created for the first game he had to meet the design requirement of breaking monotony in the gameplay by introducing a new game mechanic. This is how the "parachuting squirrel bombs" he uses as weapons came to be. In this case, the character's story came after the gameplay design: if the Hunter was such a great marksman, why wouldn't he just shoot directly at Ghat? That is when we imagined a Hunter who was blind and could only pinpoint targets which made high-pitched noises like the squirrels.



## Mountain Beast

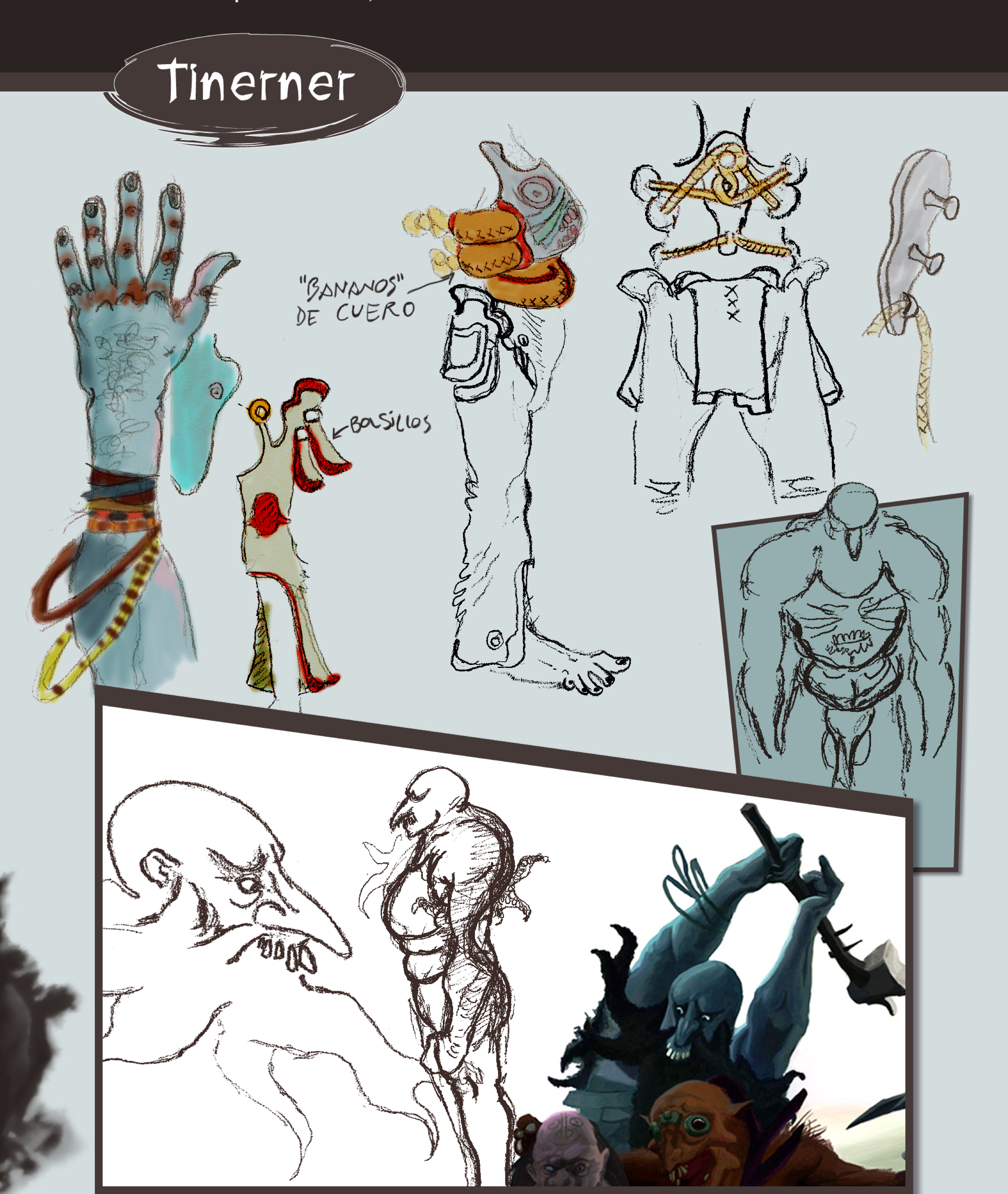
We needed a greater diversity of creatures at the more advanced stages of *Zeno Clash II*. The mountain beasts reside in the paths leading to the pink tower, and their "natural" enemies would be the two-headed chimeras.


## The Foot Collector

Just like the blind "Hunter" character from the first game, the foot collector is a hired bounty hunter that is sent to stop Ghat and Rimat in their quest. Unlike his fellow villain who works alone, he allies with the marauders. If you look carefully at the marauders you will notice they all have prosthetic feet; having no feet to begin with, they are the only ones who feel comfortable around the Foot Collector.

With this character we wanted to introduce more humanoid designs that didn't necessarily resemble an animal. Zenozoik is home to all sorts of creatures and just as the beast-like beings can come in all shapes and forms, so can the more humanoid ones.

# Tinerner





## Oorsi

Early in the development of *Zeno Clash II*, we knew it was important to introduce new enemy classes that would allow us to have more varied morphology among our NPCs. Thus, we decided to create the "short class," where Ebon—originally called "Imp"— was the debut design.

One of the early ideas for short enemies was to have them fight in pairs, with one character piggyback riding the other so he could punch the player in the face. Sadly, the complexity of this idea was a bit too complex to make it into the game.

## Ebon



# South Golem

The cynical and tired Xotl-Teh (or South Golem) chose for his Golem form symbols of authority and power that are very different from those the North Golem uses. Xotl-Teh is somewhere between a powerful gentleman in the 1900s and a king. He has a heavy vest with medallions and a cape, the decorations on his face suggest the abstraction of a beard, and the crown came from the outline of a top hat.

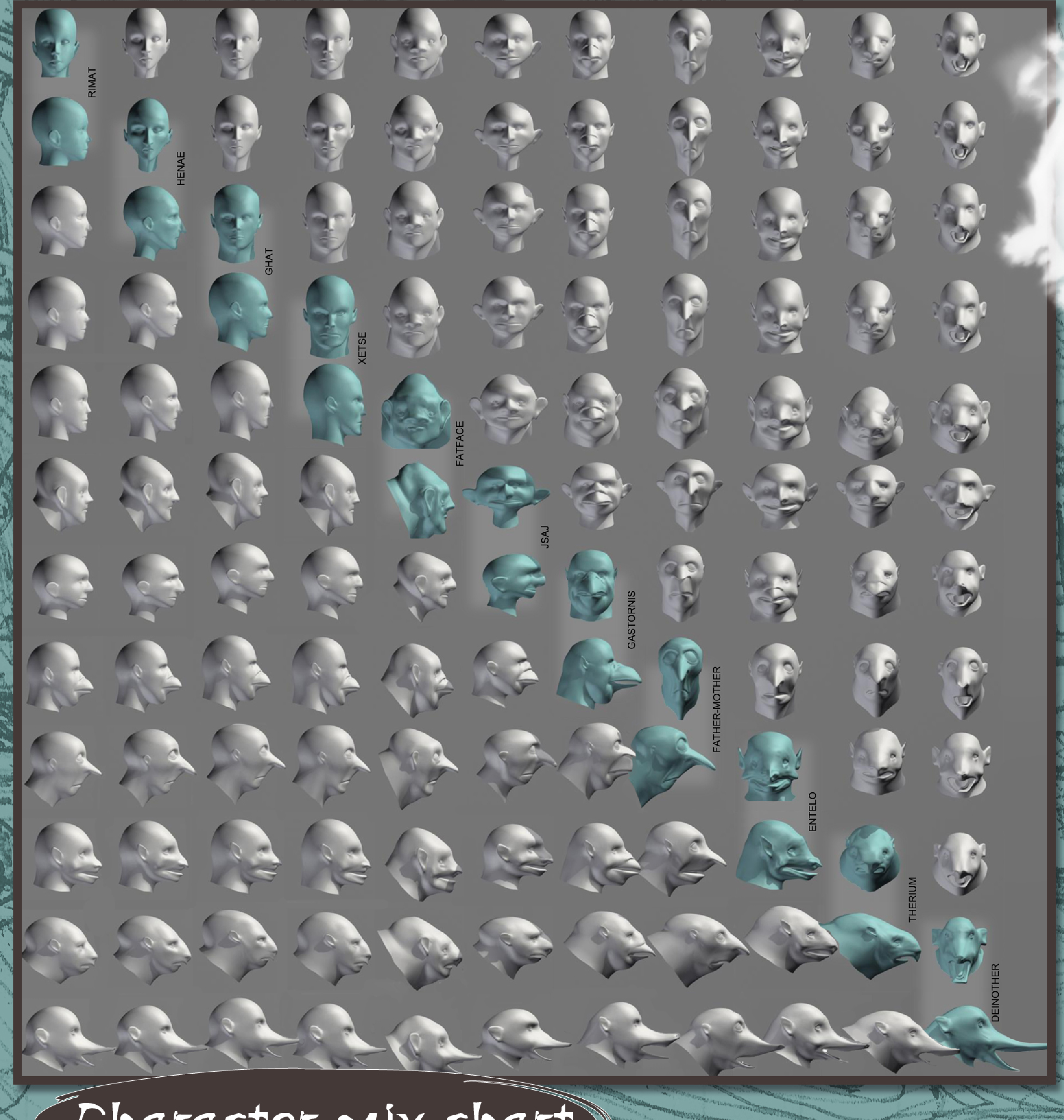




# West Golem

Golems have a living human half, and a completely artificial half. This is what remains of Samoro-Teh, which is only his artificial and automated skeleton. It might move and perform tasks like a sleepwalking person, but it cannot really think. This Golem has been inactive for so long that a seagull has begun nesting inside of him. We liked the idea that since Ghat and Rimat don't know anything about the Golems' technology, they would assume the seagull was the West Golem's brain.

The Tiamte




# Character mix chart

We never considered species in Zenozoik to have evolved completely separate from each other, but rather that all the mutations and possible combinations could exist. In this exercise we took several recognizable characters (some human, others more animal) and created a "child" for each possible combination. For example; what would a 50% bird, 50% entelodont creature look like? The "mixable head model" gave us a starting point or at least an idea to design some of the new characters.





# Weapons



# Hammers

Early in the development we decided that we didn't want a game where the protagonist would indifferently kill everyone in his path; beating up the creatures would not necessarily imply that one was killing them. Thus, we avoided the introduction of swords or bladed weapons that could sever limbs or inflict similar forms of violence. All characters could carry blunt weapons, like hammers, clubs, or sticks. We also felt that symbolically, swords are more associated with "the noble hero," "justice," and other concepts which just don't mesh all that well with the cruder world of Zenozoik.


Toothgun
Shotgun


Logos


Zeno Clash
Zenozoik
Zenozoik
Zeno Clash
Zenozoik
Zeno Clash
Making the logo
Zeno Clash



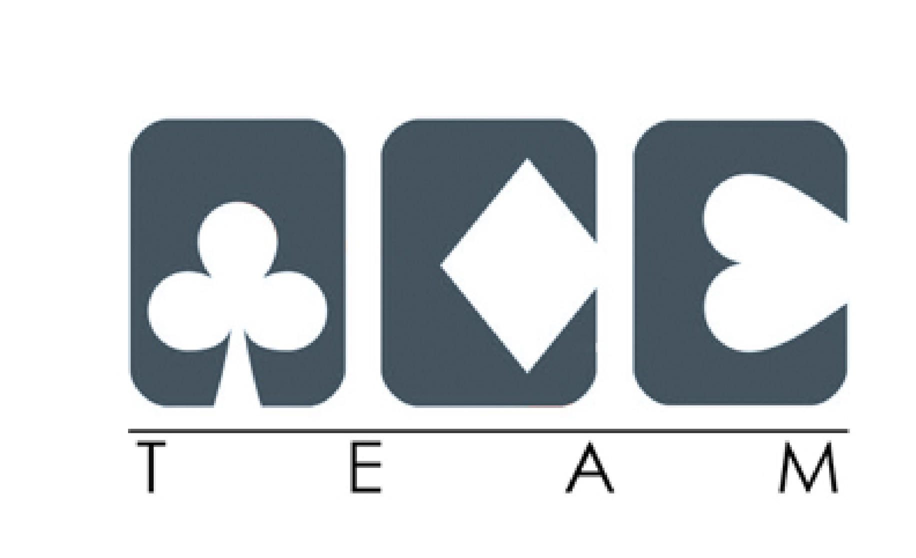


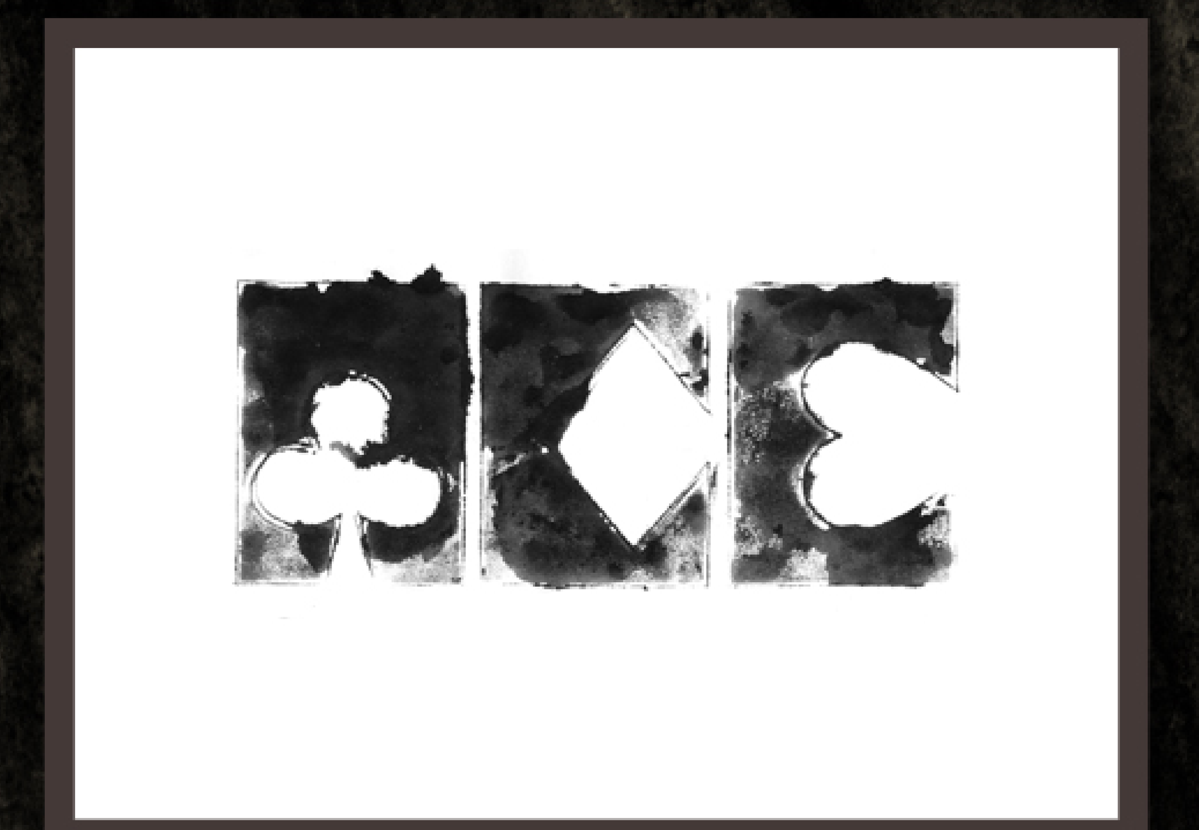


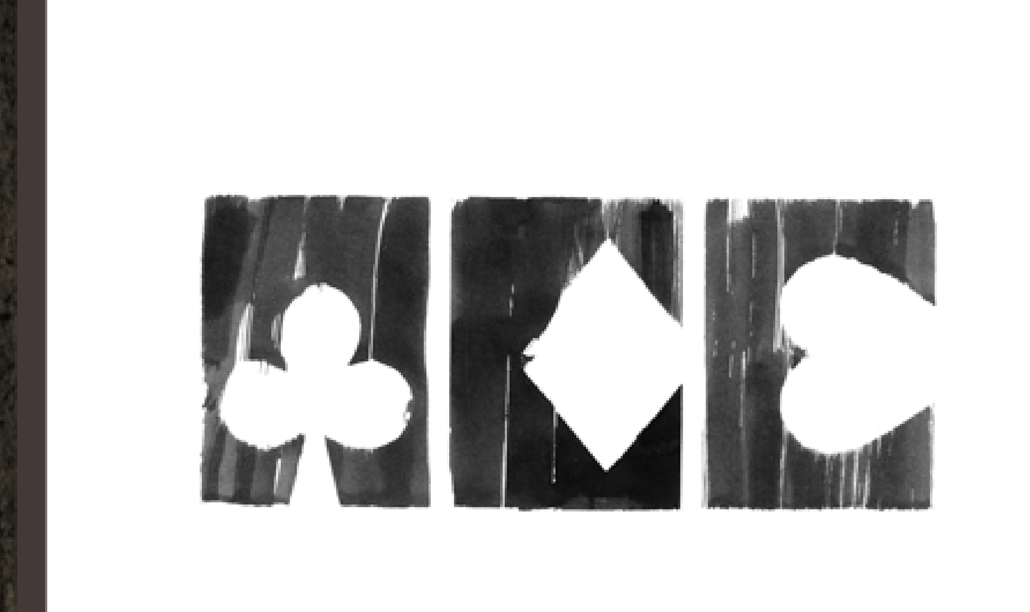




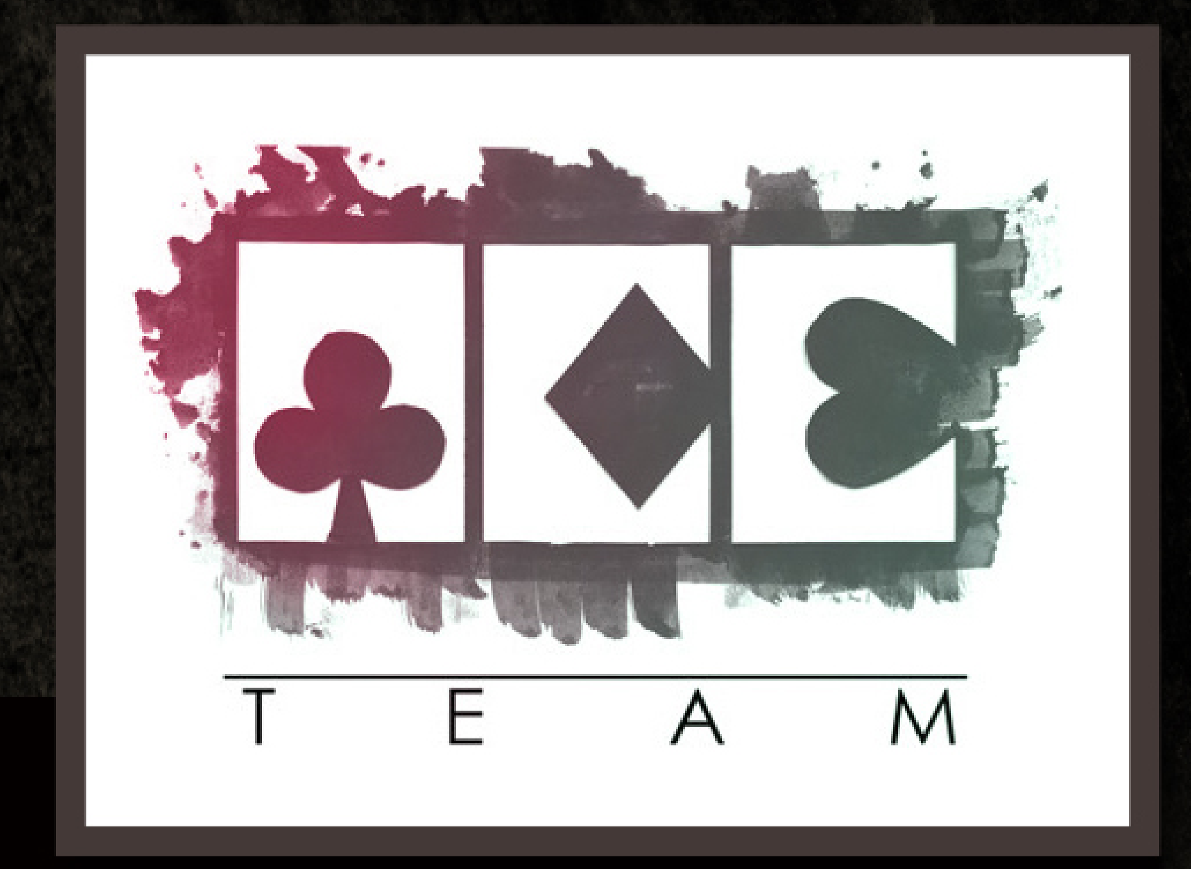




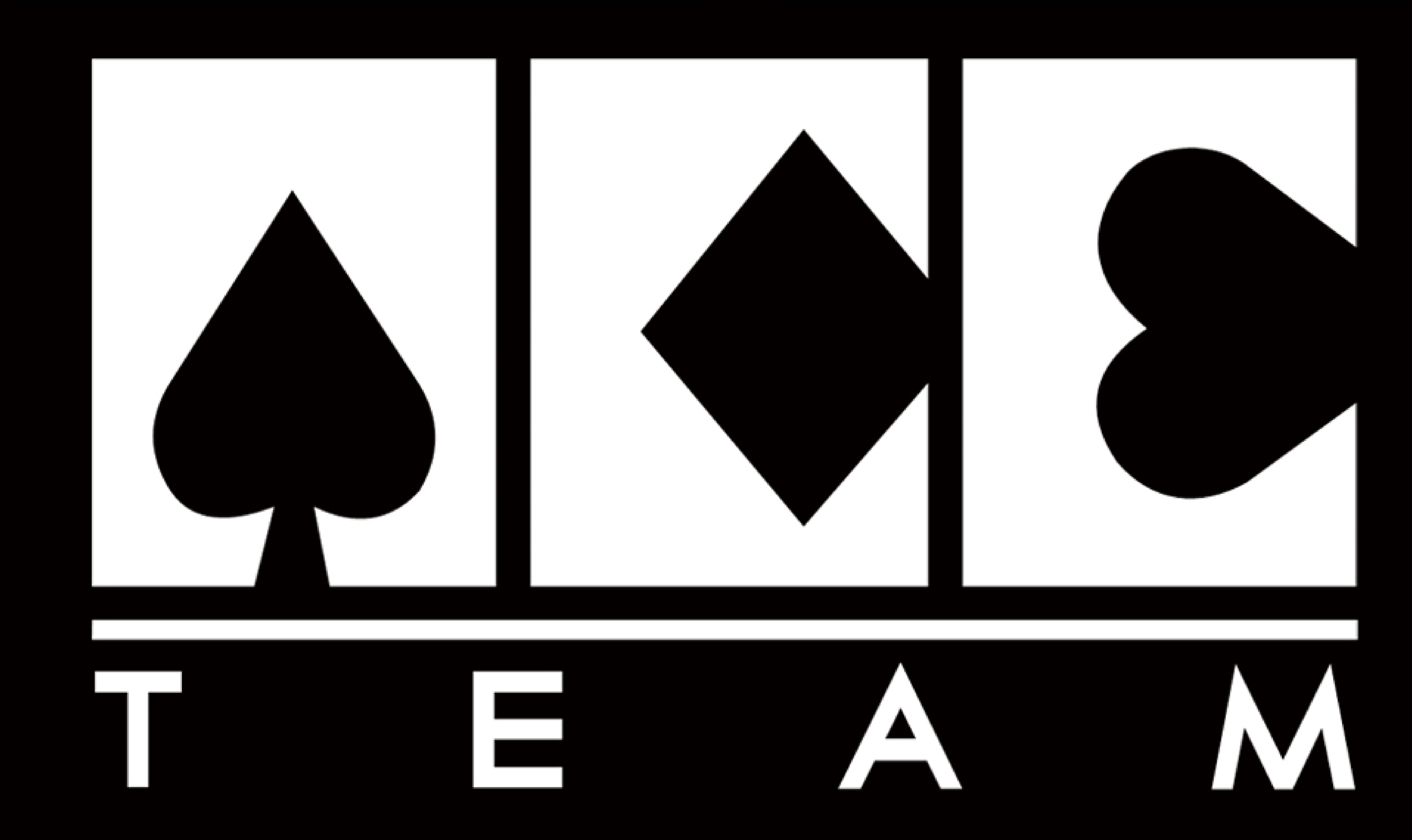













# ACE Logo

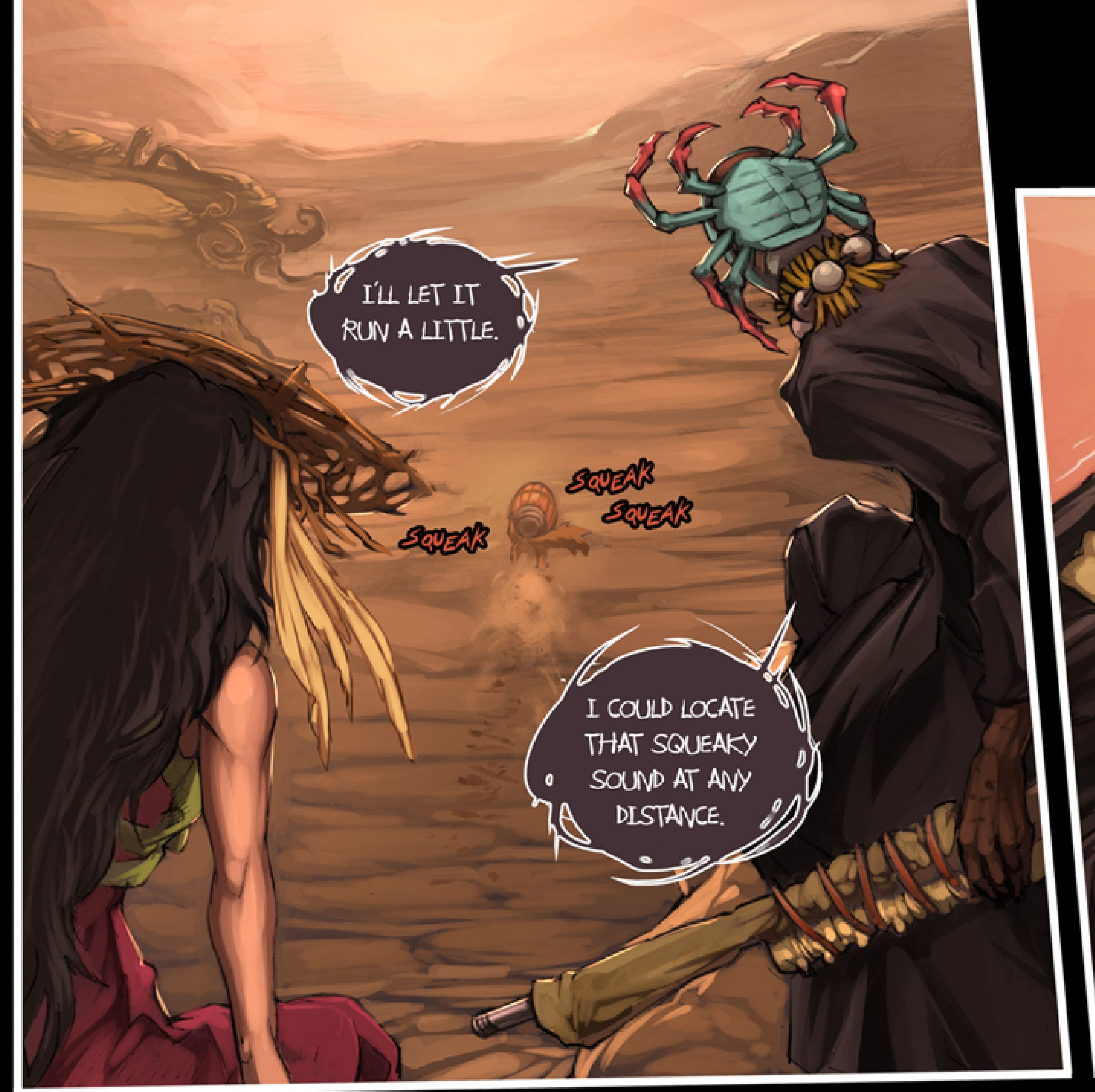
The name of the studio, ACE Team, came from the first letters of the names of the three first founders (brothers Andrés, Carlos and Edmundo). After some attempts with pixelated fonts or "edgier" ink stain versions, we decided to go with using the playing cards theme to form the word ACE. It's important for a company logo to have permanence in time, and the wrong stylistic choice can make a logo look dated very quickly.


Comic


ZENO CLASH
EDMUNDO BORDEU/STORY GUILLERMO ANGEL/ART
KAK! NOBODY TOLD ME YOU WERE BLIND.
WHY DIDN'T ANYONE TELL ME YOU WERE BLIND?
BECAUSE YOU DON'T WANT TO HIRE ME TO LOOK AT SOMETHING.
YOU ARE HERE BECAUSE YOU WANT ME TO KILL SOMETHING.
I COULD BE CHASING MY BROTHER INSTEAD OF WASTING MY TIME HERE.
I DON'T SEE HOW A BLIND HUNTER WILL HELP ME.
APPROPRIATE WORDS.
JUST SHOWS HOW SEEING DOESN'T DO YOU ANY GOOD.
YOU DON'T SEE HOW...
HA.
THOM
ACE TEAM


THAT DOESN'T MEAN I HAVE AGREED TO HELP YOU.
YOU SAID YOU ARE HUNTING YOUR BROTHER...
I'LL SHOW YOU HOW I HUNT.
FRISS FRISS
AND THAT SOUNDS LIKE AN UGLY THING TO GET INVOLVED WITH.
CLAK
NORMALLY I DON'T KILL ANIMALS...
CRUNCH CRUNCH CRUNCH
...SMART ENOUGH TO SPEAK WITH ME.
SQUEEEEEAK


IT'S DIFFERENT WHITH THESE PETS.
SQUEAK
WIG
SQUEAK
SQUEEEEAK
YOU FEED THEM, YOU TRAIN THEM TO RUN WHERE YOU WANT THEM TO...
ZAT
BUT IN THE END THERE IS NOTHING I RESPECT ABOUT THEM.
SHOOTING THEM CAN BE FUN.
SQUEAK
ALL THEY DO IS SQUEAK.
SQUEAK
NOW IF I HAD A BROTHER...
I DON'T THINK IT WOULD BE THAT EASY TO CUT ALL TIES, SO TO SPEAK.
SQUEAK SQUEAK
SNAP
HE CUT THAT ROPE HIMSELF.
NOW...
SQUEAK
SQUEAK







BBOOOM

BLAM

I HOPE YOU **ENJOYED** THAT, BUT I DON'T THINK I WANT TO HELP YOU **KILL** YOUR BROTHER.

THAT'S BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD WHAT HE DID TO OUR **FAMILY**.

ONCE YOU HEAR HIS STORY YOU'LL **AGREE** HE'S NO BETTER THAN YOUR RATS.




TEAM